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Student evaluation web sites as potential sources of consumer information in the United Arab Emirates

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the attitudes of students in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) towards non-institutionally sanctioned student evaluation websites, and to consider how educational institutions might respond to the demands of students for specific information.

Design/methodology/approach – The study involved a self-completed questionnaire administered to 118 undergraduate students at a single university in the UAE.

Findings – Even though there exists no UAE-based website that carries student evaluations of faculty/teaching, 13 per cent of the survey participants had previously visited a site that held student ratings, 85 per cent said they would consider posting on one if it existed in the country, and just over a half of the students were in favour of such websites being established in the UAE.

Research limitations/implications – Despite limitations, such as the sample size and convenience sampling strategy, it is clear that students appreciate information about course evaluations and that educational institutions should consider how students obtain this information.

Practical implications – The advent of student evaluation websites in the UAE could bring a set of challenges and opportunities to educational institutions, but, whether they are established or not, institutions might benefit from developing effective strategies for the dissemination of course evaluation and other student-related data in the near future.

Originality/value – Student evaluation websites, such as *RateMyProfessors.com*, are popular in the United States (US), Canada and United Kingdom (UK), but it was unknown how students in a relatively conservative country such as the UAE would react to such websites. Educational institutions can use the findings of this study to develop suitable policies and strategies that address the issues discussed herein.

Keywords Student evaluation websites, RateMyProfessors.com, Consumer information, Student attitudes, Higher education, United Arab Emirates

1. Introduction

In the US, over the last decade, a number of websites have appeared that allow students in higher education (HE) to anonymously rate their professors, courses and institutions. These websites operate independently of higher education institutions (HEIs). The best known is probably *RateMyProfessors.com*, which was established in 1999, and which now has in excess of ten million ratings for over one million professors in the US, Canada and the UK. No such equivalent currently exists in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), although there are a few websites, such as *Dubaifaqs.com/universities* and

DesertSpeak.com, where students can give ratings and/or make comments about HEIs rather than professors.

Of the UAE's 5.07 million population, less than 20 per cent are UAE nationals; the remainder are expatriates (UAE Interact, 2009). The largest source countries are India (1.75m) and Pakistan (1.25m). Approximately 500,000 residents are regarded as 'western' expatriates, coming from Europe or North America, as well as from countries such as Australia and South Africa. The vast majority of UAE expatriates enrol for higher education either at a private sector HEI in the UAE or at a university overseas. Countries such as the UK and Australia have agencies in the UAE that provide information to students seeking to take their higher education abroad.

The private HE sector in the UAE has grown exponentially during the last decade. There are now over forty foreign providers of HE in the UAE (Becker, 2009). Faced with a large range of programmes and institutions, and appreciating that their decisions can have significant lifelong ramifications, many students are probably left confused, frustrated and stressed when they have to make their HE choices (Drummond, 2004). Traditional economic theory would assume that the student as a consumer is a rational human being that will seek to purchase the product that offers them maximum utility or satisfaction, given their preferences and constraints, such as budget. In this context, it may be assumed that students will seek information in order to make informed choices (Menon, 2004).

The last two decades have seen considerable changes in the way universities operate globally. Governments increasingly see higher education as a commodity that can be bought and sold in the global marketplace. Higher education has become increasingly valued for its 'exchange' value rather than for it intrinsic 'use', as was historically the case (Naidoo, 2007). In the highly competitive higher education marketplace that has resulted, universities have had to find ways to differentiate themselves from the crowd (Marginson, 2004), hence the increased role of marketing in higher education.

The international branch campuses that have been established in the UAE during the last decade may be regarded as the product of the global commodification of higher education. HEIs bombard potential students with glossy brochures, corporate video presentations and lavish displays at education exhibitions, but many students still do not feel they have enough information to make informed choices. Some seek advice and guidance from professional advisers or from the agencies of foreign governments, such as the *British Council* from the UK, while others go online to find information.

Consumer behaviour is often irrational and ill informed, and customers often consider image as an important component of 'perceived' quality (Baldwin and James, 2000). Naidoo (2007) observes that skilful branding and marketing can help institutions to project an image of high quality when quality is in fact considerably lower. Many students seem to recognise this fact, and so to gain accurate and unbiased information they turn to student evaluation websites (SEWs). Such websites provide information, which may assist students to select an institution and programme with more confidence, and then, once enrolled onto a programme, student evaluation of faculty websites guide them in selecting the most appropriate optional courses (Kindred and Mohammed, 2005; Otto *et al.*, 2008; Davison and Price, 2009).

2. Literature review

When a consumer engages in high-involvement purchasing behaviour they usually seek as much information as possible to inform their buying decision. Typically, they will rely on information provided by the manufacturer or supplier, opinion leaders who have had experience of the product, and various independent sources, such as consumer

journals or associations, or official government agencies. Government agencies in most countries with developed HE systems publish 'league table' data about teaching and research quality in HEIs. They do not, however, usually publish data on individual professors or certain aspects of the student experience, such as social and recreational facilities. SEWs, which operate independently of HEIs or government agencies, now exist to fill this information vacuum.

In the US, Canada and UK there are currently a number of competing SEWs. In the US, the best known include *RateMyProfessors.com*, *RateYourProf.com*, *ProfessorPerformance.com*, *StudentsReview.com* and *ReviewUm.com*. By far the most popular site, in terms of usage, is *RateMyProfessors.com* (RMP), but *StudentsReview.com* has information and ratings not only on professors but also on various aspects of individual HEIs, including both educational and non-educational issues. Given that RMP is by far the largest website concerned with student evaluation of faculty (SEF), or student evaluation of teaching (SET), it is not surprising that articles on non-institution web-based SEF or SET in the literature tend to focus almost entirely on RMP.

Most of the literature that has examined RMP has been concerned with its reliability, validity and usefulness (Coladarci & Kornfield, 2007; Otto *et al.*, 2008; Timmerman, 2008; Davison and Price, 2009; Sonntag *et al.*, 2009). The RMP website allows students to anonymously post ratings for professors in US, Canadian and UK HEIs. Students rate professors across a range of criteria using a five-point rating scale. The criteria include helpfulness, clarity, easiness and whether the professor is 'hot' or 'not hot', which refers to the lecturer's physical attractiveness. Professors are awarded an overall score, which is an average of their helpfulness and clarity ratings. A professor with high overall scores has the symbol of a smiling face next to their name; low scores result in a frowning face. If his or her 'hot' ratings outnumber their 'not hot' ratings, then a red chilli pepper is displayed by their name.

The RMP website has obviously been designed to provide both information and entertainment for students. However, many people see the inclusion of hotness ratings as a frivolous detraction, which are generally disregarded by students who refer to the website for information, as they are primarily concerned with professorial competence and classroom experience (Kindred and Mohammed, 2005; Coladarci *et al.*, 2007). However, Felton *et al.* (2004) found that professors with hot ratings appeared to benefit from the 'halo effect', leading them to also achieve higher ratings for the other criteria.

Ratings on RMP can be entered by anyone at any time, and may, therefore, be biased. As those who decide to enter ratings on the website are self-selected volunteers, selection bias may be an issue. Given that there is no way to control who posts ratings and when, the lack of external validity is a problem with the site. For example, those posting ratings may not have actually taken a course with the professor and, even if they have, they may be in the first week of their course or they might have taken it twenty years before. Given that a professor's performance is likely to change over time, including ratings based on experiences many years ago are unlikely to be valid. If the majority of students who post ratings were dissatisfied with some aspect of their course or professor's performance, then the sample of students who have posted on RMP would not be representative of the larger population of students. However, some studies have found that online ratings by students do not lead to substantially biased ratings (Carini *et al.*, 2003; Hardy, 2003; McGhee and Lowell, 2003). Nevertheless, it is likely that the students who are most likely to post on RMP are those who have had a very positive or very negative experience with a professor.

The usual purpose of SEF/SET conducted by HEIs is to assess student learning. In contrast, RMP is more a measure of student satisfaction. Smith and Pino (2005) have

observed the general decline in commitment to an academic work ethic among students in recent years. Previous studies have found that students consider lecturers effective when they are helpful, caring, understanding, enthusiastic and entertaining (Delucchi, 2000; Davison and Price, 2009). Many students in HE nowadays seem to want the highest grades possible for the minimum work. Students who rate easiness, niceness and entertaining highly as factors that determine lecturer effectiveness are unlikely to be able to assess teaching effectiveness in any reliable or valid way (Wachtel, 1998; Davison and Price, 2009). Furthermore, Davison and Price (2009) found that students typically inaccurately perceive a lecturer's overall score on RMP as being a measure of teaching effectiveness.

Felton *et al.* (2004) examined intercorrelelations between RMP measures and found that the overall quality ratings (which are the average of the helpfulness and clarity ratings) were strongly correlated with the ratings given for easiness and physical attractiveness (hotness). Riniolo *et al.* (2006) also found perceived attractiveness to benefit the ratings of both male and female lecturers. However, Timmerman (2008) claims that it is possible that high-quality lecturers are viewed as easier and more attractive because of their competence, while Otto *et al.* (2008) note that students can interpret 'easiness' to mean that a lecturer makes the course material easy to understand. Furthermore, Langlois *et al.* (2000) found that physical attractiveness is correlated with intelligence, self-confidence and occupational success. In contrast to Felton *et al.'s* (2004) findings, Marsh and Roche (2000) found no evidence that high ratings were contaminated by grading leniency. Otto *et al.* (2008) also concluded that a lecturer's charisma, congeniality, popularity and ability to hold students' interest in the classroom may actually help promote student learning.

Coladarci and Kornfield (2007) examined the correspondence between the RMP ratings for 426 lecturers and the scores given for them in the formal SET surveys at their US university. The two primary RMP measures of helpfulness and clarity, which make up a lecturer's overall rating, correlated substantially and significantly with the corresponding measure of the university's SET questionnaire (Overall, how would you rate the instructor?). Furthermore, the RMP easiness scores correlated with the institution's question, 'How did the workload for this course compare to that of others of equal credit?' Both associations persisted even when statistical controls were in place. Coladarci and Kornfield (2007) concluded that it would be wrong to dismiss RMP ratings as meaningless. However, evidence that RMP ratings correlate with official university SEFs/SETs says nothing about the validity of the university evaluations (Greenwald, 1997; Timmerman, 2008).

3. Research questions

Websites on which students give ratings for individual professors/courses have become very popular in several countries globally, but the UAE does not yet have a well-known site that serves this function. It is quite likely, however, that such a website will become available in the UAE in the not too distant future, especially as the UAE has become a regional hub for higher education, hosting over forty campuses of foreign HEIs. Anecdotally, many academics believe that students in the UAE are considerably different to those in western countries in that they typically work harder, attend a higher proportion of lectures, have greater respect for their professors and are more determined to achieve high grades. The behaviour of HE students in the UAE may be shaped by: local cultural and religious influences; the didactic, teacher-led secondary education that many of them have received; and by the fact that most expatriate students have to pay full tuition fees at an international level. It is possible, therefore, that the attitudes of

students in the UAE to SEWs may be different to those of students in countries such as the US, Canada and the UK.

This study seeks to investigate the perceptions of HE students in the UAE to non-institutionally sanctioned SEWs that carry ratings and comments on HEIs and/or individual professors. Specifically, the research questions that this study seeks to answer are:

1. To what extent are HE students in the UAE aware of student evaluation websites (either locally-based websites for rating/commenting on HEIs or foreign-based websites for rating faculty/teaching)?
2. To what extent have HE students in the UAE previously used student evaluation websites, and for what purposes?
3. Would HE students in the UAE use a student evaluation of faculty/teaching website if one existed in the country, and, if so, for what purposes?
4. To what extent do HE students in the UAE believe that the information presented on student evaluation websites is accurate and useful?
5. What actions might HEIs in the UAE take regarding the dissemination of course evaluation data?

4. Methodology

The study was conducted at a single transnational branch campus of a UK university, located in the emirate of Dubai, UAE. The campus opened in 2005 and in the 2009-10 academic year it had over 1,300 students studying on 22 undergraduate and 5 postgraduate programmes in a range of subjects, which included Business, Tourism Management, Information Technology, Psychology and Media Communications. More than a third of the students took a programme in the Business School. To obtain an immediate snapshot reading of students' perceptions of SEWs, a convenience sample was used. The sample consisted of 118 full-time undergraduate students (aged 17-24) taking a Business programme (in the English language) who volunteered to self-complete a written questionnaire consisting of sixteen questions. The sample was approximately equally balanced with regard to gender, and the vast majority of students came from expatriate families living in the UAE, with the most common nationalities being Indian, Iranian, Pakistani, Middle Eastern Arab (such as Jordanian, Syrian, Egyptian and Lebanese) and African (mostly Nigerian and Kenyan). The sample cannot be considered representative of the UAE student population, but it is nevertheless sufficient to offer an insight into the attitudes of undergraduate students studying in the UAE to SEWs.

The questions were designed to discover whether the students were aware of SEWs, whether they had ever visited them, whether they would use them if they existed in the UAE, how they would use them if they existed in the UAE and their views on how accurate and useful the information on such websites might be. All of the questions required the students to respond by ticking in boxes, except when they were giving explanations or additional information. Three questions consisted of the question followed by a range of options from which the student selected one answer, for example, their main motive for using student evaluation websites. The remainder of the questions required students to give Yes/No or True/False responses, and these covered topics such as the criteria they would use to give ratings for professors and how they thought the ratings on SEWs would compare with institutional SEF/SET scores. The questionnaire was administered in the classroom at the end of regular classes.

5. Findings and discussion

Whilst there exists no well-known equivalent of *RateMyProfessors.com* in the UAE, there are a few websites on which students can give ratings and/or make comments about HEIs. It was found that not only were many students aware of non-university sanctioned SEWs, but of the 118 students participating in the survey, 15 had actually used one. However, these students had not used local websites based in the UAE or Gulf States; they had used American or Canadian websites, accessed either in the US or Canada when they previously lived/stayed there, in order to gain and/or provide information, or in the UAE, to gain information when they had in the past been considering possible study in the US or Canada. None of the seven students who had previously given ratings on a SEW had been rating a UAE HEI or a professor teaching at a UAE HEI.

When asked whether they would consider posting ratings on a UAE-based SEW if one existed, 85 percent of the students responded that they would; 31 per cent of these students said they would do it to provide useful information for other students, as a 'public service'; 48 per cent to recognise good professors, as a way to say 'thanks' or to encourage other professors to be better; and, 18 per cent, to identify bad professors and to shame them into improving, or to put pressure on the university to bring about improvement in the professor's teaching performance. SEWs are very popular with students in the US (Otto *et al.*, 2008), and students globally are spending more time on their computers on social networking sites, and exchanging information with others. There is little reason to doubt that if SEWs became available in the UAE they would eventually become as popular as they are in the US and Canada. However, of the 18 students who said they wouldn't post on a SEW, eight gave written reasons: 'not bothered' (4), 'no time for this' (2), 'will not be any good' (1) and 'don't know' (1).

It has been suggested that investigating student perceptions of SEF/SET is useful because there may exist a link between willingness to participate in such evaluations and opinions about teaching effectiveness (Abbott *et al.*, 1990). Specifically, Abbot *et al.* found that students preferred mid-term to end of semester evaluations and that they preferred giving feedback through group interviews rather than traditional individually completed written questionnaires. The authors explain that students preferred the group interview method because they value being able to compare their opinions to other students. Using SEWs also allows students to compare their views and educational experiences with those of other students.

A primary reason for the popularity of SEWs is students' desire for information about classes and professors, and while most HEIs conduct SEFs/SETs, the results of these evaluations are not generally made available to students (Kindred and Mohammed, 2005). Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) examined users' motives for using the Internet, and found that the reasons included information seeking, convenience, entertainment and the ability to express oneself freely. All of these motives can be satisfied through using SEWs. Some 82 per cent of the survey participants said that they would visit a SEW to read scores and information posted by other students if such a website existed in the UAE; 41 per cent of these students would consider ratings and comments posted when deciding which university to go to, 43 per cent to help decide which optional/elective courses to take, and 13 per cent would read ratings and comments just for casual interest. Of the 21 students who said they wouldn't bother visiting SEWs to read information, 13 gave written answers, including 'not bothered' (6) and 'would not be reliable' (5). One student wrote, 'would not like to have this done to me'.

The student sample was asked how it would rate their professors if they were to use a SEW. Some 86 per cent agreed that they would only give scores and comments solely

on the basis of a professor's professional performance; 70 per cent said that they might give *higher* scores to professors who were friendlier and more cheerful; 59 per cent said they might give *higher* scores to professors they found more likeable; and, surprisingly, 60 per cent confessed that they might give *lower* scores to professors who had taught courses in which they were disappointed with their grades. This last finding offers some support to previous studies that found a positive correlation between easy grading and high evaluations (Felton *et al.*, 2004; Davison and Price, 2009).

There was little agreement among the student sample about how accurate the ratings and information on SEWs would be. It was found that 24 per cent thought the information posted would be accurate, as most students would tell the truth; 63 per cent thought that the information would be mostly accurate, but recognised that some bias could occur, for example, students who failed a module might give unfairly low scores; and, 13 per cent said they would not trust the accuracy of scores or comments posted on such websites. However, 69 per cent of the sample believed that students would give more accurate feedback on SEWs than in formal institutional SEF/SET surveys. A total of 64 per cent believed that students would be less likely to fear revenge from their professors when using SEWs compared to completing institutional SEF/SET questionnaires. A study by Ahmadi *et al.* (2001) found that one of the reasons given by students for not writing in the comments sections of SEF/SET forms was the fear of losing their anonymity. Other reasons given by students for not writing comments on SEF/SET forms were the belief that their comments would have no influence and that they only thought it necessary to complete the written section when something about the class or professor had been exceptionally good or bad. A figure of 67 per cent of the survey participants in this study also believed that some students would post inaccurate ratings or comments on SEWs in order to be malicious or to 'have a joke'.

Universities have become businesses, and like any other business, their customers must be satisfied. Whether or not they accurately measure teaching effectiveness, both official university SEFs/SETs and independent SEWs are probably highly accurate measures of student satisfaction. John Swapceinski, RMP's founder, believes that the website owes much of its success to the fact that students are increasingly demanding more information, because they see themselves as customers who want the maximum value from their financial investment (Kindred and Mohammed, 2005). Students are able to obtain information from SEWs that they would otherwise only be able to obtain first hand from other students who they come into contact with. It can be argued that SEWs are simply satisfying students' hunger for information.

Just over a half of the survey participants (54 per cent) were in favour of having SEWs in the UAE; 11 per cent were opposed to SEWs and did not want to see them operating in the UAE; and 35 per cent replied 'don't care'. It should be remembered that 87 per cent of the survey participants had never before visited a SEW and may have had no prior knowledge of these websites. As a result, they may not have had enough time to consider the possible benefits and uses of such websites.

Many academics remain sceptical about the quality of information on SEWs, and many are concerned particularly about the reliability and validity of data, and the large scope for biases. Previous studies have found that student evaluations can be biased against older lecturers (Arbuckle and Williams, 2003), female lecturers (Centra and Gaubatz, 2000), homosexual lecturers (Ewing *et al.*, 2003) and less experienced lecturers (Fries and McNinch, 2003). A large proportion of academics probably also find the basic concept of being publicly evaluated by students, who are able to post ratings and comments anonymously, both distasteful and unproductive. Managers of HEIs may be concerned about the public availability of data over which they have no control, and which may be highly inaccurate and biased.

If HEIs in the UAE were to publish the results of their own SEFs/SETs, and other data that students would find useful, this could make the establishment of new SEWs in the country less attractive or indeed unnecessary. Furthermore, if HEIs developed their own versions of RMP, they could focus on real measures of learning and provide data that would be informative and useful to students and potential students. In this scenario, students who wanted accurate information about teaching evaluations, student pass rates, student retention or employment rates would most likely rely on the official sources of information, and any SEWs that existed would most likely focus on their entertainment value. However, Pounder (2007) argues that educational institutions should break from conventional SET methods and develop, and experiment with, new approaches to assessing classroom dynamics.

In certain countries, governments are forcing universities to make more information publicly available, and to be more transparent about a larger range of issues. For example, since July 2010, universities in the US have been required to publish information on a government website about the success of their graduates in finding employment, student retention and completion rates, the average net price of a degree (so that the effects of additional expenses paid and grant aid received by students can be more clearly seen), as well as data that reveals the history of annual increases in tuition fees (Marcus, 2010). The 'College Navigator' website in the US already lists the proportion of applicants admitted to an institution, the average amount of student loans they take out, the percentage of first-year students who return for a second year, and the percentage who graduate. As many aspects of the UAE HE system have been modelled on the US system, it would not be surprising to see the UAE government following the US's lead to make more information available to students. HEIs in the UAE can wait until this time comes or they can be proactive and provide this information before they are forced to do so.

SEFs/SETs serve two main purposes: first, they provide information that can help institutions and individual professors to improve teaching delivery, and second, they can assist management in making decisions about faculty contracts, reward and advancement. SET is used at UAE University, a federal public sector university based in Al Ain, as a factor in determining contract renewals, long-term contracts, merit awards and promotions, as well as being used to improve faculty performance in the classroom (Badri *et al.*, 2006). Schmelkin *et al.* (1997) found that, in general, lecturers view course evaluation by students as useful. Furthermore, Symons (2006) observed that it was the repeated patterns in students' comments that provided a useful insight into the issues that are important to them. Assuming that SEWs eventually arrive in the UAE, it may be useful, therefore, for HEI managers to use them to supplement or complement their own internally conducted student evaluations. SEWs should not be used independently of the formal SEFs/SETs done internally, but they may be used as an addition to contribute to an improved understanding of a professor's teaching effectiveness and the issues that are important to students.

Whilst most lecturers *may* find course evaluation by students useful, at least to some extent, many remain completely sceptical about the value of non-institutionally sanctioned SEWs. Some probably try to discourage their students from going on websites such as RMP, but if students want to find out more about professors and courses, they may not have other options for gaining such information. Coladarci and Kornfield (2007) argue that rather than discouraging students from going onto RMP, lecturers and HEIs should actually encourage their students to post ratings and comments on RMP. The emphasis must be on *responsible* contributions, but if a large proportion of an institution's student body regularly and responsibly contributed on SEWs such as RMP the potential value of that information to the institution, to students

and potential students would only be enhanced. A total of 85 per cent of the students in this study said they would consider putting posts on a SEW if one existed in the UAE, which indicates their willingness to share their views and experiences with others.

6. Conclusion and implications for practice

This study is not without limitations, such as sample size and the convenience sampling strategy. Respondent bias may exist as a result of including only students studying business courses in the survey, and by relying on self-selected volunteers an additional bias towards including students who have an interest in SEWs or students who had previously used them could be present. Nevertheless, this was an exploratory study and it is believed that the findings offer an invaluable insight into the attitudes of HE students in the UAE to student evaluation and SEWs. It is clear that students generally appreciate access to information about course evaluations. Not only were the students in this study aware of SEWs, 12.7 per cent had actually used one. Some 82 per cent of the survey participants said they would visit a SEW to read scores and information posted by other students if such a website existed in the UAE, and 85 per cent said they would consider posting ratings on it. The scale of this study means that its findings are not generalisable to all UAE students, but they do at least suggest the need for HEIs to consider the issues discussed in this paper and to conduct further research that might support these findings.

Higher education has undoubtedly changed over the past twenty years; increased competition, reduced funding, and students who increasingly perceive themselves as customers, who purchase a degree rather than an education, are factors shaping this metamorphosis. In response, universities have begun to act more like businesses, focused strongly on increasing their enrolments, which they achieve through implementing marketing strategies that typically involve developing and articulating a strong brand (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007). The market profile and level of recognition of an HEI are critical factors in determining its success (Mazzarol, 1998). An HEI could possibly improve its image and reputation by making student and faculty related data more publicly available. Furthermore, where SEWs exist, HEIs must ensure that the information posted on them enhances rather than damages their ‘brand’. HEIs have a choice: either they can provide the information that students want, in which case they will have control over the information, or they can allow the information to be provided by others, which might be through SEWs or through data published by governments and quality assurance organisations.

The concept of regarding students as customers is problematic in several respects. For one, quality of education is hard to measure and it requires the effective participation of students in addition to high standards of instruction (Baldwin and James, 2000). Secondly, many students expect to achieve their degrees regardless of their abilities and the levels of effort they put into their studies. Students who fail to achieve the grades they want are likely to become dissatisfied and more liable to give negative SEFs/SETs, as well as lower ratings on SEWs. The threat of this happening can influence professors to be more lenient with their grading. Another study conducted in the UAE found that many professors believed students were being awarded higher grades than they deserved; poor course evaluations, complaining students and concerns over job security were identified by them as some of the causes of grade inflation (Gerson, 2010).

In summary, the appearance of SEWs in the UAE could bring with it a whole new set of challenges and opportunities for HEIs. This paper suggests then, that ignoring the facts of when and indeed if SEWs become established in the UAE, HEIs should

consider developing transparent controllable mechanisms to disseminate course and/or professor ratings as well as other student-related data as a matter of priority.

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